Title: **You Can’t Be Any Poorer Than Dead** Comparison Story: **A Good Man is Hard to Find**

Summary:

There is 14 year old boy named Tarwater who has been raised by his 84 year old “Uncle Tarwater”. According to the old man, the boy was being raised by the old man’s wacky nephew who is a schoolteacher. Well the old man lived with the nephew for a while and claimed he was just “crazy” and that he used him because the nephew had taken observations of the old man for an editorial he published. The old man steals the boy at a young age and raises him despite the unsuccessful attempts for the nephew to get the boy back.

One day the old man simply dies at breakfast and the young boy is faced with the task of burying the old man deep in the ground as he had requested. He starts to reflect back on the things the old man has to him/for him. As the boy starts to dig, the character starts to have an instance of split-personality syndrome as part of himself, known simply as the Stranger in the story, tries to convince Tarwater that the old man raising the boy was not a good thing.

The two black neighbors show up requesting their jugs to be refilled; Tarwater says he will fill them if they will dig the grave while he is gone. Tarwater goes to fill the jugs in the woods but runs across Uncle Tarwater’s liquor stash and gets drunk. All the while, his split personality changes from a stranger into a “friend”. He wakes up; and after convincing himself he doesn’t want to live this life anymore decides to burn the house down and run off. He catches a ride with a salesman into the city.

**Comparison to a good man is hard to find**:

These two Flannery O’Connor short stories are two completely different adventures, but they both contain fundamental similarities. These are similar points that can be found across pretty much all of Flannery’s short stories.

One of the most initial standout similarities is the **setting** of the stories. Both “You Can’t Be Any Poorer Than Dead” and “A Good Man is Hard to Find” have settings in the Southeast United States. “You Can’t Be…” is set on a very isolated property somewhere in Alabama, and “A Good Man…” takes place on traveling trip through the ‘middle-of-nowhere’ of Georgia/Tennessee. It’s meant to represent the ‘Ole South’ and the stories are driven by distinctly southern overtones.

Both stories are fleshed out with a stretched sense of **realism**. This is seen in the types of characters presented in both. The characters are not invincible, something that becomes very apparent at the ending of “A Good Man…”, and the characters are far from perfect. The **Protagonists** in both novels each have their share of flaws. Tarwater from “You Can’t Be…” is very apathetic and almost acts a grudging pessimist throughout the story. The old lady from the other story is lacking any sense of humility and is found to be clueless to the rest of the world, she seems to be living in a blissful life of ignorance. This is immediately apparent whenever she tries to talk the Misfit out of shooting her but she doesn’t even fully realize that her entire family has already been shot.

Both of these Flannery O’Connor short stories include obvious Christian themes or references to the Bible. This is found in a large number of O’Connor’s stories, which would have been influenced by her strong Catholic background. As mentioned above, both protagonists are imperfect, which goes to show the Christian belief that all, even the often idolized main characters of our favorite stories, have sinned or are full of imperfections. Both stories seem to have, thanks to these Biblical **allusions**, some underlying intentions to beg the question of morality to the readers, especially the questionable morality of some of the characters. The boy Francis Tarwater struggles deeply with this morality which is seen by his inner decision struggles which are exemplified by a metaphorical “stranger” persuading him.

Picture



Rationale:

I chose this Norman Rockwell painting because it seemed to synthesis both stories into one simple analogy; An presumably stronger-standing person, in this case the police officer and the waiter, try to guide someone in need of help, the child, in the right direction. In “You Can’t Be…”, the great-uncle Tarwater takes matters into his own hands and tries to raise the boy in the way he sees as right. Likewise the schoolteacher uncle desires to the same, except in his view of the right way to raise the boy. You can even see this desire to lead someone in the right direction during Tarwater’s little moment of split-personality where the “stranger” persuades the boy into a certain direction. In “A Good Man…”, the old lady tries to talk the Misfit out of shooting her by unsuccessfully trying to persuade him to see the good in himself.